

Appl. No. 10/604,404
Response dated February 27, 2006

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 15-19 are amended. Claims 1-19 are pending in the application. Claims 1-14 are allowed; claims 15-17 rejected as indefinite; and claim 18 rejected as obvious in view of Grotz, Jr. Claim 19 stands withdrawn as directed to a non-elected invention, but the final office action does not indicate whether the claim will be rejoined or needs to be canceled. Further examination of the application, as amended, reconsideration of the rejections, reconsideration of the restriction requirement and/or rejoinder of claim 19, and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Although not believed to be necessary, claims 15-17 have been further amended as suggested by the examiner to clarify that these dependent claims include each of the features recited in claim 14 to which they refer, including the underlying process features as well as the improvement features. It is thus believed that the 112/2 rejection is overcome and the claims are allowable.

Claim 18 has been amended to affirmatively recite the work output from the liquid expansion means, and thus is believed to patentably distinguish over Grotz, which merely shows expansion of the feed vapor in a gas-expander 276 with work output and subsequent liquid throttling of the

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bottoms stream from the distillation column with a valve. The unobvious benefit of energy savings by recompressing the makeup synthesis gas from a higher pressure, which eclipses the decrease in expansion work output, is thus incident to the apparatus in claim 18.

The final office action did not address applicant's request for reconsideration of the restriction requirement and/or rejoinder as to claim 19 on the ground that it is a linking claim in means-plus-function format paralleling the process steps of allowable claim 10. See MPEP (8th Ed.) §806.05(e):

If the apparatus claims include a claim to "means" for practicing the process, the claim is a linking claim and must be examined with the elected invention. If it is ultimately allowed, rejoinder is required. See MPEP § 809.04.

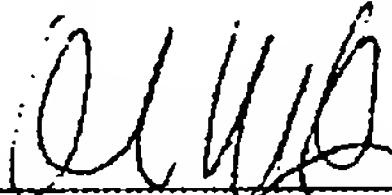
Moreover, claim 19 also recites the same liquid expansion means that distinguish claim 18, and applicant thus need not rely on any additional features recited in claim 19 (at least with respect to claims 1, 10 and/or 18) to establish patentability. Therefore, no additional searching or burden would be imposed by examining claim 19, which should be allowable over the references cited for the same reasons as claims 1, 10 and/or 18.

Withdrawal of the rejections and the restriction requirement, and allowance of all pending claims, are respectfully requested. Should any

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issues remain that are appropriate to resolution by telephone interview,
please contact undersigned counsel.

Respectfully submitted,



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